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To be returned to

NO.: CA-3435 October 31, 1955

SUBJECT: The Proposed Libyan University

TO: The American Embassy, TRIPOLI
The American Embassy, BENGHAZI

RPTD INFO: American Embassy, CAIRO

JOINT STATE-ICA MESSAGE

Reference is made to TOICA 182 and previous correspondence.

The Department and ICA consider that an institution of the type recommended by the University of Nevada team is best suited to Libya's needs and capabilities at the country's present stage of development. Since, however, the Libyans have gone forward on their own and now plan to found an embryonic university more along Egyptian lines than that envisaged by the Nevada team, the U.S. must take a basic decision on its position vis-a-vis the new university. The Department and ICA/W realize that their representatives in the field have been faced with a difficult problem, and hope that this instruction will be useful in meeting it. Three possibilities present themselves:

1. That the U.S. disassociate itself entirely from the venture and, in the process, withhold all technical assistance from the university. In addition, under this policy, the U.S. would use its considerable influence on LARC to prevent any LARC money from being spent on the university;

2. That the U.S. consider that the nature of a Libyan university is, after all, the business of the Libyans. Under this policy the U.S. would furnish appropriate technical assistance within the existing framework of the USOM/L and would accede to the Libyan majority wish expressed in LARC to provide the university with LARC funds; and

3. That the U.S. recognize the apparently overriding pressure on the Libyan Government to set up a university, but at the same time use every legitimate means at hand to influence the Libyans towards the Nevada concept and away from the Egyptian, or at least to ensure that the best of the two concepts is incorporated into the new institution.

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The last possibility represents of course a compromise which, given the present circumstances, the U.S. in its best interests may have to make. If the U.S. were to disassociate itself from the university, particularly by attempting to withhold LARC funds, the resentment of the Libyans, including the King, might jeopardize the working relationships within LARC. If, on the other hand, the U.S. were to accede completely to the present proposal, it would appear that Egyptian interests, which might well run counter to U.S. interests, would be gratuitously served. An additional factor of some relevance is the indication that the Prime Minister wants to combine the Egyptian and the American systems and that the educational expert Egypt has provided for the university is a man with whom the U.S. education advisers feel they can work.

Consequently, unless the Embassy and the USOM perceive overriding objections, the Department and ICA/W recommend that the approach described above under (3) be used. The comments of the Embassy and the USOM/L are requested.

Ii this approach is used, the American members should make it clear to the Libyans on IARC that the U.S. does not, as a general policy, consider that projects involving schools of essentially a cultural nature fall within the category of economic development as envisaged in the September 9 Agreement, and that the U.S. is making an exception in this case in view of the particular importance of the university to the Libyans.

The problem thus becomes one of how to use the legitimate means at hand to influence the Libyans. The proposals of the Department and ICA described below are necessarily tentative and subject to the judgment of the Embassy and the USOM/L as to their efficacy. In addition, suggestions from the field for the amendment of or addition to this list will be welcome.

A. Placing an American as executive assistant to the President of the university or as Director of Education (suggested in Davies letter to Tappin of October 12).

B. Making the strongest representations possible to the Libyan Government that the need for occupational training, including teacher training, be taken into account in establishing the curriculum.

C. Reminding the Libyans--if tactically feasible--that any additional economic assistance in FY 1956 or in future years will be granted only within the framework of Mutual Security legislation. In other words, the details of any economic assistance program will have to have prior approval from Washington before funds are forthcoming. Insistence by the Libyans on spending IARC funds on a project to which the U.S. is basically opposed will simply not be good tactics on the part of the Libyans if they wish to obtain more economic assistance in the future.

D. Suggesting

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D. Suggesting to the Libyans that, as the university develops, an American be placed at the head of the Colleges of Physical Science, Agriculture and ~~EDUCATION~~ Teacher Training. (Question of furnishing people to fill these positions through ICA will be the subject of a separate communication.)

E. Emphasizing that, once the decision has been made to use LARC funds, the money should not go to meet expenses of a budgetary or recurring nature. In addition, LARC funds should obviously be used sparingly and for the purposes of which U.S. representatives in Libya feel they can approve.

In essence, it appears certain that the Libyans are going to have a university, whatever attitude the United States may take. It would therefore be better to join the endeavor, with a view to influencing it along lines which the United States considers to be in the best interests of Libya, rather than oppose the project entirely.

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